

Thrush's Song

NORBERT KOVACS

Well within the game refuge, I heard a wood thrush sing somewhere past the tall trees on a spring day. His song came like a sonnet, its lines distinct as in a poem. The first, *tu-loo loo*, short and dulcet, caught me right off. The phrase had a pregnant quality promising more to come, and I held quiet, listening for it. Soon, the second line followed: *tu-LOO*, a tight, tense expression, admirably sharp and clear. I listened for more, pleased. The song's third line flurried forth: *tula-la-a-la-la-la*. The emphatic *las* blended like jumbled words, bringing ideas of peace, happiness, and love to mind all at once. Then there came a change. The fourth line, *tula-la-la loo*, was shorter and quieter. This and the silver-toned *tu-la-la loo* that followed gave the song a surprise sense of loss. It was a blue, beautiful sentiment I found I liked. The thrush gave now an emphatic *tu-loo loo* that rounded out the song by repeating its first line. Silence ensued; it made the warm, still air of the spring woods feel clearer. The thrush sang the song again, then a third and fourth time, its high, quick parts varying. But he expressed it always with its original vigor and clarity. He could have sung the melody forever and not sounded a bit older for it, I think.

Two weeks later, I was walking the blue-orange trail in the state forest a few towns away when I heard another wood thrush sing high in the trees. His song came in neat stages, ascending and quieting as I had heard at the refuge. Listening to it, I liked to think I'd have an easy walk down the trail. Then, I cut myself climbing over this fallen tree in the path. I called out; a very red line of blood shone on my right knee that my shorts had left bare. Quickly, I sat down and clamped a paper towel from my bag over the cut. As I waited for the scab to form, the wood thrush, still in range, sang again. His song went through the

phrases I'd heard; there was a line hinting promise, a second line suggesting excitement. The song was musical and vigorous as before, but there now felt something missing. I was in pain, and the thrush kept singing. I realized, listening to him, that he had no thought I'd admired him or that I was bleeding now. He couldn't understand those things; he was part of nature, and nature was not going to show any sudden sympathy for me despite what I had felt earlier. This truth was strange to accept. I sat, sort of numb thinking of it, my hand pressed to my knee as the thrush went on singing in the distance.



Twisted Tree in the Sunlight
Lisa Tomey-Zonneveld